the plate portion is pressed by the roller.

REMARKS

INTRODUCTION:

Claims 20-21 are added herein. Claims 1-21 are pending and under consideration.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §102:

Claims 1-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by JP 2000-237887.

Using independent claim 1 as an example, this claim recites a servomotor as a driving force for moving the roller to press the roller "in the plate thickness direction." Thus, the invention of claim 1 realizes the advantage of optimizing the relationship between the position of the weldpoint and the position at which the plate portion is pressed by the roller 14. This optimization may be achieved for different plate thicknesses. See page 9 of the present Specification.

In contrast, the servomotor of JP-'887 does not press the roller in the plate thickness direction. Instead, the servomotor 43 of this reference orients oval pin 41 with respect to the side walls of groove 7. Specifically, the servomotor 43 rotates the oval pin 41 by a predetermined angle to make the oval pin 41 contact the side walls of the channel 41.

Furthermore, a roller 9 is centered in a width direction of the groove 7. Thus, instead of adjusting in the plate thickness direction, the adjustment takes place in a width/length direction of side panel 3. Specifically, the roller 9 moves rightward, as shown in FIG. 1 of this reference, while pressing a piled-up portion 5 of the roof panel 1 of a car and the body side panel 3, in order to rectify the gap of the panels 1, 3. During the travel of the roller 9, laser beam 11 is irradiated onto a welding line P in the channel 7. The roller 9 is connected to pressure cylinder 29 through the bracket 37, the holding block 33, and the piston rod 31. Thus, this reference cannot optimize positions of the elements for various plate thicknesses, and is similar to the features described in the Prior Art set forth in the present Specification.

Accordingly, independent claim 1, and claims 2-3 depending therefrom, are patentably distinguishable over the cited reference. Independent claims 4 and 7 are similarly patentably distinguishable over this reference.

Furthermore, claim 2 depends from claim 1 and recites "means for measuring the position or speed of said roller and means for carrying out feedback control according to a measurement result." It is respectfully submitted that JP '887 does not recite these features.

NEW CLAIMS:

New independent claim 20 is added and recites "a servomotor to drive the roller and press the roller in a thickness direction of the plate..." Accordingly, claim 20, and claim 21 depending therefrom, are patentably distinguishable from JP '887.

CONCLUSION:

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: 5-13-03

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